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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the expressed commitment to teaching of 17 "high ability" students who were recruited as high school seniors for careers in teaching. During the 2-year recruitment phase of their collegiate program, changing levels of expressed commitment to teaching as a career choice were evaluated at three points using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Data presented in this paper indicate that: (1) aspects of career commitment can be identified and described; (2) level and aspects of commitment are variable across time and may be influenced by institutional and personal factors; and (3) several of these factors may be influenced by faculty and curriculum of postsecondary education. It is argued that commitment to teaching as a profession and a career choice can be developed and nurtured prior to the beginning of what is typically considered "traditional" teacher training activities. The notion of a "sustained" stage of recruitment of students into teaching is thus proposed. (Author/JD)

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The Development of Commitment to Teaching

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## The Development of Commitment to Teaching

### Abstract

This paper examines the expressed commitment to teaching of 17 "high ability" students who were recruited as high school seniors for careers in teaching. During the two year recruitment phase of their collegiate program, changing levels of expressed commitment to teaching as a career choice were evaluated at three points using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques.

Data presented in this paper indicate that 1) aspects of career commitment can be identified and described; 2) level and aspects of commitment are variable across time and may be influenced by institutional and personal factors; 3) several of these factors may be influenced by faculty and curriculum of post-secondary education. The authors argue that commitment to teaching as a profession and a career choice can be developed and nurtured prior to the beginning of what is typically considered "traditional" teacher training activities. The notion of a "sustained" stage of recruitment of students into teaching is thus proposed.

## Introduction

Educational institutions have been under increased pressure to produce a more competitive workforce in the United States. This drive toward greater economic productivity has resulted in calls for educational excellence and the restructuring of post-secondary education. Perhaps nowhere has the drive for excellence in post-secondary education been discussed more than in teacher education. As two prominent teacher educators noted (Schlechty & Joslin, 1984):

We believe that the most effective way for schools to develop and maintain quality is to examine the way many high technology organizations (e.g., IBM) train, lead, manage, and evaluate their workforces. Schools are not factories, but they are organizations. Furthermore, the purpose of these organizations is to direct the activities of children in ways that make them effective and efficient knowledge workers. Thus, organizations that have experience in managing knowledge workers may provide instructive models for those who would reform schools to meet the conditions of the twenty-first century. (p. 60)

At the fulcrum of this debate, concerns regarding the commitment and ability of those students entering teaching have been raised. Weak commitment to teaching may be evidenced by the number of students who fail to complete their professional preparation program, who receive a teaching certificate but do not teach, or who leave the career within just a few years (Schlechty & Vance, 1983; Vandehey, 1981). Based upon his analysis of the responses of 400 randomly selected teaching certificate recipients from the University of Michigan, Chapman (1985) concluded:

Those who never entered teaching reported the least initial commitment to teach, the highest levels of job and life satisfaction, and greater career mobility than career teachers. To begin as a teacher and soon leave seemed, on the other hand, to set people back in their career accomplishments. . . . Those who started teaching and then left seemed disillusioned. (p. 656)

Conceptually, commitment to teaching has been defined as the belief in the importance of teaching and the willingness to dedicate oneself to that career (Goodell, 1968). Operationally, our definition is a person's stated interest in teaching and expressed willingness to work in a classroom for at least five years. Participants in this study also were asked to project their future occupation when they reached 30 years of age.

A person's commitment to teaching is based on intrinsic and extrinsic factors. In his ground-breaking work on teachers, Lortie (1975) defined extrinsic rewards as those that exist independent of the person holding a position. These rewards have an "objective" quality about them. Intrinsic, or in Lortie's language, "psychic rewards," are completely subjective assessments.

Examples of intrinsic factors contributing to one's career commitment to teaching at the preservice level would be personal interest in the subject matter, sense of community and positive interpersonal relationships in the preparation program, internalization of the institution's goals, and the joy in helping others learn. Examples of extrinsic factors affecting one's commitment to teaching would include: salary, career prestige, opportunities for career advancement, and public recognition (Strickland, Page, & Page, 1986). These extrinsic factors are

more salient to students who are less committed to teaching (Marso & Pigge, 1986).

Commitment is also a continual process of negotiation as one interacts with others (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1984). Examples of social interaction affecting initial teaching commitment include routine dialogue among college students about college majors, classroom interactions with professors, and the pedagogical methods used in education courses (Sears, 1984).

Institutional reforms designed to develop and enhance the commitment of preservice teachers, and to recruit students who would not otherwise consider teaching as a career often focus on these extrinsic and social interaction factors. Research findings regarding the effectiveness of programmatic reforms (e.g., upgrading curriculum, toughening admission standards, and enhancing career opportunities) to accomplish these goals, though tentative, are encouraging (Beyers, 1984).

If initial commitment to teaching is sensitive to post-secondary reform efforts, then might this contribute to better retention of teachers in the classroom? In a test of a proposed model of teacher retention, initial commitment to teaching was found to be the single strongest predictor of retention. Based upon these data, Chapman (1984) proposed that:

Teacher preparation programs can have a significant impact, through efforts to reinforce and encourage commitment to teaching or to encourage those who are unsure about teaching to seek alternatives. (p. 605)

Programs which seek to foster commitment to teaching as a career,

therefore, merit close examination.

The second concern in this debate is poor ability as evidenced in the relatively low academic performance and intellectual prowess of teacher education students and teachers (Chapman, 1984; Lowther, Gill, & Cappard, 1981). Reformers often assume a causal relationship between intellectual ability, academic performance, and teacher effectiveness. Not surprisingly, among the myriad of reforms proposed by teacher educators and policy makers has been the recruitment, preparation and retention of "high ability" persons into teaching. As one proponent of this reform noted:

It is possible to attract quality students into education, but teacher educators must look at some different ways of reaching the "cream of the crop." The implementation of an aggressive recruiting program will be the first step toward enhancing the image of teacher preparation programs. (Tack, 1986, p. 79)

In the ideal world of reformed teacher education, then, preservice teacher candidates would be academically strong persons willing to make a long-term commitment to a career in teaching.

Of course, a variety of factors affect a person's teaching career choice. The most common reasons for not choosing teaching are salary, working conditions, and opportunities for career advancement; the most common reasons for choosing a career in teaching are the satisfaction of working with children, imparting knowledge, and instilling a sense of personal self-worth (Marso & Pigge, 1986). Beyond the reasoning underlying such decisions is the recognition that students' career choices are greatly influenced by teachers, parents, and friends (Marso & Pigge,

1986; Strickland, Page, & Page, 1986).

Top choices for high-ability students include engineering, medicine, high-technology, business and law. These careers parallel the choices of teachers for their most able students (Lucas, 1985). Furthermore, college students pursuing degrees in high-status fields such as engineering are more likely to have chosen their careers earlier than students pursuing degrees in professions of relatively low status such as education (Williams, 1983).

Taken together, this information suggests that as high school students learn of the status and rewards accompanying careers, academically talented students may, from their earliest inquiries, be specifically directed toward careers other than teaching. For these high-ability students, the greatest attractors to teaching would be opportunities to contribute to humanity, career advancement, and prestige; the single greatest detractor to teaching is salary. Indeed, fewer than one-quarter of high-ability students are even willing to consider teaching as a career (Brogdon & Tincher, 1986). Those academically able students who do enter teacher education programs tend to be less certain about teaching as a career, and more influenced by their interest in subject matter and career opportunities (Marso & Pigge, 1986).

Based upon the aforementioned information, it is hardly surprising that few high-ability students choose teaching as a career, and that few classroom teachers, guidance counselors, or teacher education programs actively recruit academically talented students. Although the recruitment of high ability individuals to teach is appealing, high ability teachers (or any teachers) with weak commitments to their career choice will do little



to enhance the profession. Therefore, innovative programs that seek to implement such proposals merit close examination.

This paper reports the impact of an extended recruitment model for developing and enhancing high ability persons' commitment to teaching as a career. Data from this paper were collected during an on-going, six-year study of the Bridenthal Internship in Teaching Program (names are fictitious)--a teacher education reform model designed to recruit, prepare, and retain high-ability persons into teaching (see Marshall, Sears, Otis-Wilborn, & Fulton, 1987 for a detailed description of the recruitment phase).

This paper has three primary objectives: (1) to conceptualize and to describe the changing levels of student commitment to teaching; (2) to identify factors which influence those levels of commitment; and (3) to explore the importance of post-secondary faculty and curriculum in developing and enhancing career commitment. Using the career of teaching as a focus, four questions will be addressed. First, what is teacher commitment? Second, how can this concept be assessed or its absence/presence be determined? Third, does commitment to teaching fluctuate during students' post-secondary school experience? And, if so, what personal and institutional factors contribute to this fluctuation? Fourth, in what ways can post-secondary faculty and curriculum develop and nurture career commitment to teaching?

## Procedure

### Participants

Seventeen "high ability" students were actively recruited by the

director of the Bridenthal Internship in Teaching program (BIT) to participate in a model teacher education reform program. Students in their senior year of high school applied for scholarships that promised to pay 50% of their college expenses for four years and to provide an additional \$2,000 salary supplement for each of their first two years of teaching. In return, students committed themselves to complete the teacher training program and to teach for two years in a local school district. Students who fail to fulfill their obligations are required to repay the scholarship with interest.

Fourteen women and three men, known as Bridenthal Interns, were selected from more than one hundred applicants to participate. These students graduated in the top ten percent of their high school class, received numerous academic awards in high school (e.g., National Honor Society member, National Merit Scholar, class Valedictorian) were recommended to the program by school personnel (i.e., teachers, principals, coaches), and were rigorously screened by the program's director.

### Curriculum

The introduction of these students into the teaching profession began in their first year at Calvin College. A weekly seminar was conducted each semester in which current issues related to education were discussed. Additionally, students had opportunities to visit schools to observe and work in classrooms with "master teachers" in local districts. Finally, opportunities for these students to participate in local, state, and national educational conferences were arranged (Marshall & Moyer, 1987).

At the end of their sophomore year, these students began the university's conventional series of education courses along with the school's "regular" group of teacher candidates. The special group of seventeen students, in many respects, had a two-year "head start" in their professional training and general involvement in education.

Such periods of professional engagement and study prior to students' formal commitment to certification programs is not new. Freeman (1985) describes a sixteen-year-old five year teacher preparation program at Austin College which reflects a similar pattern. Austin's program contains four undergraduate "Labs," the first three carrying no course credit. The first, taken as early as second semester of freshman year, presents interested students with an overview of the entire program. In the second lab, students spend most of their time doing focused observations in actual classrooms. Returning to campus for lab three, students encounter philosophical and methodological foundations of education. By the time students reach the fourth lab (taken for course credit), they have been presented with 50 hours of classroom teaching coupled with a campus-based seminar. Student teaching, in this extended program, takes place during year five.

A different, more recent example of early exposure to the world of teaching is seen at Winthrop College (Hawisher, 1985). Students interested in or even just curious about teacher preparation take a three-hour course, as freshmen, called "Introduction to the Teaching Profession" which includes lectures on broad pedagogical topics and site visits to schools. Performance in this course becomes one of several important factors considered later, when students apply for entry into the

formal teacher education program.

Each of the programs described above represents a curriculum designed to provide students with an early exposure to the teaching profession. Such a design serves two important ends: (1)\students can make a more informed decision about whether or not to enter the formal teacher preparation sequence, and (2)\students who might have had little inclination to become teachers can become better, more broadly informed about the career of teaching. Thus, early, varied, and prolonged contact with the field of teaching promotes self-selection in or out of teacher preparation programs. When it works as self-selection into teaching, early exposure can be seen as a form of "extended recruitment" into teaching.

The unique curriculum experienced by these seventeen Calvin students was not simply a preliminary extension of the university's standard preservice teacher education program. It set out, instead, to provide students with a professional perspective. During the first three semesters at Calvin College, these future teachers developed a broad based introduction to schooling in the United States and demonstrated a noticeable pride in and zeal toward their chosen career that clearly set them apart from their preservice peers.

#### Methods and Techniques

The study employs a multi-stage design and a complementary combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Data collected include individual, audio-taped interviews of the Interns, their parents, and the BIT program faculty at regular, pre-determined points throughout the course of this study. The first set of interviews,

conducted at the beginning of the Interns' freshmen year, provided baseline data on program expectations, commitment to teaching, and career choice. At the end of their first year, each was again interviewed to collect impressionistic data relative to their being Bridenthal Interns and Calvin College students. Additionally, the Interns were interviewed in a large group during a "feedback" session during which results were shared with the Interns.

Complementing the interview data were Interns' personal journals and non-participant observation data systematically collected in both formal and informal settings. These included observations within the formal classroom settings, during informal student-faculty interactions, and at various field sites.

Four standardized instruments also were administered to the Interns at their entry point into the program. The Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1985) is a vocational counseling tool that, among other information, provides a summary code keyed to a specific occupation. The Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1978) is a screening instrument to gauge maturity in the career decision-making process. The Survey of Personal Values (Gordon, 1984) is designed to measure values of personal importance that may have a bearing on the way one functions and makes decisions on a daily basis. The Survey of Interpersonal Values (Gordon, 1976) is a forced choice instrument designed to measure the relative importance ascribed to each of six factored interpersonal value dimensions.

During the second year of this study, all interviews were videotaped and in addition, most were simultaneously audio-taped. Videotaping was

particularly valuable for capturing the nuances and unspoken messages and interactions which occurred during the discussion. Interns took part in three interviews during their second year. As their interests and perceptions evolved, so, too, did the direction of the interviews. Interns also were asked to construct a portfolio of teaching-related academic work. Additionally, data from interviews conducted in the first three semesters were used as a basis for developing a paper and pencil instrument which was administered at the conclusion of their second year.

At the end of the second year, parents and faculty associated with the BIT program were interviewed. Data from these interviews were especially helpful in providing a richer understanding, from different perspectives, of the Interns' commitment to teaching and satisfaction with their career choice. Figure 1 presents an overview of data collected throughout the "Recruitment Phase."

### Data Analysis

Annually, all audio-taped interviews were transcribed and standard analytical methods were used. Video-tape data were evaluated using a frame-analysis technique; journals, portfolios and observations were systematically categorized and analyzed (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The paper-and-pencil and standardized instruments were analyzed using traditional statistical techniques.

All data sources outlined above were reviewed by three researchers to determine recruited students' long term commitment to teaching as a career choice (i.e., their intentions to teach for five or more years after graduation from the teacher training program). Commitment was

measured and characterized at three points in the first two years of the training program; upon entrance into the program, after one year in the program, and at the end of the second year in the program.

Two models with which to describe students' levels of commitment emerged from the data collected. That is, the data directed the formation of the illustrative and evaluative models. At the first two points (beginning and end of year one), qualitative data formed the basis for evaluation of commitment. A long term commitment to teaching was determined if the interns a) expressed in interviews the intention to teach for five years or more after graduation, and b) considered teaching a viable career option for themselves.

At the end of the second year, however, quantitative data sources were used in the analysis to verify and interpret data from qualitative sources. Interns were evaluated as having a long-term commitment to teaching if a) in interviews and on relevant paper and pencil questions the intern indicated that he or she would be teaching five years after graduation; b) the intern's three-digit career code on the Self-Directed Search matched one of the major teaching codes listed in the Occupational Guide; and c) the intern obtained a total score above the X on six Likert type questions measuring aspects of commitment to teaching (specifically designed for this study). Reliability of evaluated levels of commitment was obtained through interjudge agreement.

In addition, Interns' motivations for teaching were assessed. Motivations for Interns' strong or weak commitments were determined to be for personal reasons (working with people, salary, vacations) or professional reasons (improve overall educational system, contribute to

reform efforts). The combination of level of commitment and motivations for commitment gave a clearer picture of the Interns' perspectives on teaching as a career.

## Results

### The Beginning of Year One

In the first year of the scholarship program, each student was categorized into a sub-group that described his/her career orientation as a function of expressed level of commitment to teaching. Based on the analysis of data from student, parent, and staff interviews as well as informal observations, career orientation was assessed on two points: a) explicit long term commitment to teaching (strong or weak), and b) serious consideration of teaching as a career option (yes or no). Each Intern's career orientation was described. Four sub-groups emerged: "Converts," "Mavericks," "Reservationists," and "Traditionalists."

Eight students had seriously considered teaching as a career option prior to the inception of the BIT program and their induction into it. These students, the "Traditionalists," are those typically drawn to teacher education programs. If the program had not existed, these students more than likely would have pursued a degree in education at some college or university. A typical comment from a student in this category: "The need to teach is inside me. It has always been there for as long as I can remember." When asked about what they would be doing at age 30, these students indicated that they would likely be teaching.

The second largest group was the "Mavericks." These students, if not for the scholarship program, never would have considered teaching



as a college area of specialization and expressed throughout their first two years at Calvin minimal levels of commitment to pursuing teaching as a lifetime career. A typical comment from a student in this category was: "I had not considered teaching a prime option. Even though I'm going to be a teacher for two years, it'll give me a good basis so that I can .\.\. get a higher degree." Presumably, the attractiveness of the program's scholarship arrangements, the opportunity to attend a small prestigious school, and the chance to take part in this special program had some bearing on these students' decision to enter a teacher preparation program. The extent, however, to which these factors influenced students is impossible to determine at this point. Four students initially were placed in this sub-group.

A third subgroup, the "Converts," were students who, like the "Mavericks," never had considered teaching as a career. Nevertheless, in their initial interviews they expressed a long term commitment to a career in teaching. For these students, there was the realization that some match existed between teaching and other interests they actively had pursued for a number of years. One Convert, when asked about his or her attraction to teaching, stated: "Teaching allows me a chance to combine my interest in working with kids with interests in psychology and counseling." Three students fit this sub-group upon entrance into the program.

One student fell into a fourth sub-group of persons who had seriously considered teaching as a career prior to applying for the scholarship program, but was uncertain about remaining in teaching for a long time. In the words of this "Reservationist": "I wanted to be a

teacher before I heard about the program, but [now] I am not sure. I have so many choices. What do I chose?"

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Insert Figure 2 about here  
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Figure 2 illustrates the positioning of students relative to their levels of commitment to teaching as a career upon entry into this program. Generally, the "Converts" and "Traditionalists" expressed strong commitments to teaching as a career choice while the "Mavericks" and "Reservationists" exemplified low levels of commitment. The "Mavericks," "Converts," and "Reservationists" initially were thought to be the students that merited monitoring, but as it turned out, even the "Traditionalists" demonstrated interesting changes of heart during the first year.

#### The End of One Year of Recruitment

After one year in the program, a change appeared in the expressed commitment of these students to teach (see Figure\3). On the basis of data from an additional set of interviews and observational data, shifts in the directions of interns' commitments to teaching and overall feelings about becoming a teacher were evident. All but one of the students who had not seen teaching as a serious long term commitment ("Converts" and "Mavericks") changed their positions. Each "Convert" now saw teaching as a viable career, explaining that the experiences in the program allowed them to realize the complexity and challenges of the occupation. As one described it, "I'm more on the inside now."

The "Mavericks" also shifted. Two maintained some skepticism about how the public would view them as teachers, but were more ready

to defend their future careers. One, however, still was not ready to commit to teaching as a long term career.

Several of the students who always had considered teaching ("Traditionalists") showed a waning of their original commitment. Two of the students from this category developed reservations about teaching as a career. For one student, this shift was based on the sharp contrast between positive experiences from high school and what this Intern had observed in the schools during the first two semesters of involvement in the program.

The level of long term commitment appeared to slip with two other students who described themselves more as "Reservationists" than "Traditionalists" at the end of the first year. While they still saw teaching as a worthwhile career, their broad exposure to aspects of the education profession led them to believe that teaching is "more difficult" and "more serious" (i.e., much work involved) than they previously imagined.

By the end of the first year, the levels of commitment expressed by many of the students changed. On the whole, the students' commitment to teaching, actually, had grown weaker, not stronger. After an intensive first year of induction into education, more students moved into the "Reservationists" subgroup. The efficacy of this reform model to effectively recruit high ability students into teaching was challenged.

#### Semesters III and IV of the Recruitment Phase

During the second year, a number of changes in the program structure occurred. First, the seminars and the special gatherings of the first year slowly disappeared. Additionally, the program director, who had involved himself heavily in the academic and personal affairs of all

of the Interns, saw them on an irregular basis and more at the students' urging than at his. Some Interns expressed frustration over what was perceived as "favoritism." Interns were hand picked by the director for participation in special events, and often the same few Interns were consistently selected.

In the third semester, arrangements were made for Interns to be placed in a classroom under the direction of a "master teacher" (Master teachers are identified by their career ladder placement). The type and level of classroom selected, in most cases, was based on the specific teaching interests of each Intern. Also, at the beginning of semester three, a new graduate student mentor was assigned to the program. This mentor dealt less specifically with individual Interns' daily lives and served more as a liaison between the program's director and the Interns. This, too, was disconcerting to some Interns.

In the fourth semester, Interns were no longer treated as a unique group and were integrated into the introductory education classes with peers who had just entered the regular education training program (spring semester). The Intern group began to separate. By the end of the second year, many of the Interns' interview comments focused more on the similarities they shared with other education students in the training program than on the differences between the two groups. There was a new and larger group of peers to get to know, contacts with other professors in the Department of Education to establish, and decisions to be made regarding their areas of specific study within the field of education (e.g., special education, secondary math, etc.). These students began talking about why they continued in teaching as a career choice;

what they expected to accomplish for themselves personally and in the field of education at large.

The Interns' satisfaction with the changes in the program, however, were varied. Some expressed the desire to maintain the structure and extend the influence of the group not just locally but nationally. They viewed their potential as that of "change agents" in education. This desire, however, was not realized in year two and students did not see much hope for year three. Others expressed disappointment because the group was no longer getting together. Although there were a few Bridenthal Interns who had decided to get on with the business of life in general and becoming a teacher in particular, most were torn between the desire for the BIT group to remain a distinct and important entity and the realization that the BIT program and its loosely assembled group of seventeen was changing.

In addition to these interview data, paper and pencil questionnaires and attitude surveys were used to reevaluate the levels of commitment to teaching. Each Intern's commitment to teaching and motivations for their commitment were evaluated using the aforementioned data sources. Observations of the different reactions to the disintegration of the group of 17 indicated that Interns may be committed to teaching for different reasons. Motivations for the level of commitment were for a) primarily personal reasons, b) primarily professional reasons, or c) a combination of both personal and professional reasons. Personal reasons included love of children or the enjoyment of working with people, convenient working hours, and a three month summer vacation. Professional reasons were expressed as a desire to impact various aspects of education (e.g., improve

the image of the profession), and improve the quality of education.

To determine students' expressed commitment levels and their motivations for pursuing a teaching career, specific qualitative and quantitative data were consulted to answer the following questions:

1. Does this person have a long term commitment to teaching (at least five years of classroom teaching)? (yes or no)
2. To the extent that this person is committed to teaching, is she/he motivated primarily for personal reasons, professional reasons, or a combination of both?

Results of the answers to the above questions produced a two digit code for each student that summarized students' levels of commitment to teaching and their motivations for commitment (see Figure 3).

By the end of year two, twelve of the seventeen students indicated a long term commitment to classroom teaching (70.5%). Their motivations in over 83% of the cases stemmed from primarily personal (n=4) and both personal and professional (n=6) reasons. The remaining 17% (n=2) were motivated for professional reasons only. It appeared that at the end of the second year, almost one half of the strongly committed students had integrated the professional aspects of teaching that were exposed in year one, with what they saw as the personal rewards to be reaped from teaching. The other one half had found some other personally viable reason for committing to teaching.

Two results are important to note. First, the long term commitment of the group as a whole returned to the level at which it was at the outset of the program. Second, a much larger percentage than ever before now seriously considered teaching as a legitimate career choice.

Table 2 summarizes the shift in students' commitment from their entry into the program to the end of year two.

### Patterns of Commitment

Patterns of commitment were assessed using only the complete data sets (data for all three points of the Recruitment Phase) which were available for fourteen of the seventeen interns. Results of the first classification system (described in the previous section) were translated to indicate a strong or weak commitment for fall, 1984, and spring of 1985. Reservationists and Mavericks were assigned a "W" for weak commitment and Traditionalists and Converts were assigned an "S" for strong commitment. For the spring of 1986, interns with a code of 1 (weak commitment) were assigned a "W" and interns with a code of 2 (strong commitment) were assigned an "S." Six patterns of commitment across the three points were identified (e.g., SSS, SWS, WWS, etc.).

Examination of changing commitment across the two year "extended recruitment" phase illustrates general patterns of commitment to teaching. For some interns, attitudes about the course of study they had chosen were unchanged throughout the two year recruitment phase. Four of the fourteen remained strongly committed (SSS) and two maintained their weak commitment (WWW) with which they had entered the program.

The eight other interns demonstrated the following patterns:

- a) initially strong commitment that faltered but was regained (SWS, n=4);
- b) initially strong commitment lost (SSW, n=1);
- c) initially weak commitment that developed into a strong

commitment (WWS, n = 2);

- d) initially weak commitment that showed signs of development, but did not manifest (WSW, n = 1).

Changing levels of commitment were the product of interactions of a number of variables including personal feelings of the interns toward the scholarship program, teaching, Calvin, and other education students, and specific aspects of the BIT program.

Strongly Committed Interns. By spring, 1986, two groups had formed. Ten of the fourteen interns finished year two of the program with strong commitments to teaching. In this group of ten were all of the original Converts, all but one of the original Traditionalist, one Reservationist, and one Maverick. It appeared that, at this point, the program might have been able to assert that it successfully recruited three students who originally had never considered teaching prior to their involvement in BIT. Also, in all but one case, the program's first two years had not discouraged those who planned to teach anyway. The program even convinced the only original Reservationist that teaching was, in fact, a viable career for them. Finally, the BIT program might boast the recruitment of a Maverick into a long term career in teaching (originally conceptualized as the program's ultimate challenge). The BIT program, however, was not the sole influences. Other influences in combination with the BIT program appeared to affect an Intern's commitment to teaching.

The four SSS and four SWS interns (Converts and Traditionalists at the start) in this strongly committed group maintained balanced perspectives on the BIT program and their future teaching career. They



clearly recognized and utilized the program's resources (speakers, opportunities for field work, individual attention, financial aid, a support group) to facilitate the achievement of their ultimate career goal. Their amount of involvement in the program varied, however, from intensive (giving speeches, frequent contact with director, etc.) to minimal (e.g., living off campus, but had friends in the BIT group). Regardless of the amount of involvement, these Interns always maintained that the real purpose for their participation was to become teachers and they used the program to the extent needed to achieve this.

These eight strongly committed Interns also clarified their ideas regarding the ways in which a teaching career would facilitate other important goals. As they explained, a commitment to teaching can be shared easily with marriage, family, and the pursuit of other interests. Along with the potential fulfillment of personal goals, teaching will provide each of these Interns the opportunity to work with others; a reason all maintain strongly influenced their decision to teach.

Four originally committed Interns (SWS), however, waned in their commitment to teach at the end of year one. To begin with, they expressed much frustration with the BIT program and the intern group. For example, all mentioned the irritation they felt because of their continual identification with the BIT program which was not always positive. In the eyes of one Intern, for example, they were seen as "Bridenthal brat[s]." Their desire for separation may have been prompted by these and other responses from peers at Calvin. One member, of this group was hurt that people who heard about the BIT program failed to see each individual's accomplishments unrelated to the

BIT program: "No matter what we accomplish or what we do, the figure [\$26,000] is still going to stand out." Additionally, high expectations accompanying the role of Bridenthal Intern created anxiety and stress. These Interns were in a unique situation compared with other Calvin students. And, although the support of the group was comforting, it also could be smothering and uncomfortable.

Another possible reason for the drop in commitment of these four interns was the realization that teaching would be more difficult than they originally thought. Recognition of problems in the profession and the realities of teaching became more apparent. One Intern indicated "I now know schools in the city which I would not like to teach in."

What renewed these four Interns' desire to teach? The most obvious influence was their field experience at the beginning of year two. Interns had examined the profession from a broad perspective in their first year. During the first semester of year two, however, they had three hours per week to observe and become involved in one classroom. Most interns specifically requested classrooms that related to their potential major in education.

This particular experience helped the Interns make final decisions regarding their pedagogical course of study and their eventual profession role. Three of the four in the SWS group either began the program unsure of their professional direction or changed their minds regarding their specific area of study. While indecision about their role in the profession may have contributed to dissatisfaction at the midpoint of the recruitment phase, the opportunity to see and play the part of "teacher" renewed their excitement during year two.

The second SWS Intern who was originally a Reservationist, entered the BIT program without clearly defined teaching goals. The Intern remained unsure throughout the first year about the specific role that the Intern would take in the teaching profession. After a successful field placement, however, in year two, this Intern had no trouble identifying the grade level and the specific content area on which to focus.

Two of the ten strongly committed Interns showed an abrupt turn from a weak commitment in the first year to a strong commitment to teaching by the end of year two (WWS). For these Interns, also, the second year brought definition to themselves as classroom teachers and they felt comfortable with what they saw. One Intern (a Maverick in the beginning) explained:

I finally did get to go out there with the students where it was happening. . . . that's what finally made me think I was doing something because before [that field experience] we were talking a lot about issues and I was learning a lot about it [teaching] but I didn't know for sure if I was getting anything practical out of it.

Also, although this Intern was a member of the touted BIT group, field experiences in the first year were not positive ones: "I felt like they [the teachers and administrators] don't really want us out there, they don't want us asking questions, nosing around."

Weakly committed interns. Four of the fourteen Interns in this analysis came out of the extended recruitment with what was assessed as a weak commitment to teaching; they did not express the belief that they would be teaching five years after graduation. These Interns can be

characterized as those who "never had it" (WWW, n = 2) who "tried to get it" (WSW, n = 1), and those who "lost it" (SSW, n = 1).

Those interns who never expressed a strong commitment to teaching entered the BIT program as Mavericks. For one Intern, the commitment to a content area of study outweighed the commitment to teaching. Attempting to complete a double major in addition to the education courses, this Intern faced summer school and struggled with heavy course loads during the school year. The Intern wrote: "I will declare my second major when I am a senior if it is possible for me to complete it [my second major]. If not, I will complete it while I'm teaching." Clearly, this intern had concerns other than classroom teaching and viewed the BIT program as an adventure on the road toward another career.

The second Intern who "never got it" expressed little that could be construed as commitment. For the most part, the Intern discussed the day to day or transient aspects of the program and engaged in little reflection on "teaching." Although this Intern considered her/himself "about as committed" as the other Interns, the Intern predicted that almost half of the original 17 Interns would not be teaching in five years.

Two Interns who finished their sophomore year with weak commitments were, at one time, the BIT program and the teaching profession's most active and ardent supporters. Intimately involved with the program's most predominant aspects, each had delivered several speeches locally and nationally and offered answers and testimonial remarks to journalists writing about the BIT program. Also, these Interns had developed a close and intimate relationship with the program's

director (one described the director as "kind of a mentor to me") and made it a point to visit with him two to three times per week. Finally, through the seminars and other program activities, these two Interns became important members of the BIT group. According to sociometric data, although both were recognized as important to the group, neither was considered to be among the most desirable colleagues.

As key spokespersons for the program, these interns espoused the role that BIT was to have in the education reform movement. "There hopefully is going to be a major movement in the United States to revamp the education system. We are at the forefront of it. We are going to be in the midst of an educational revolution in the United States." In terms of the success of the program, one Intern was adamant that not only would all of the 17 original Interns finish the six year program but also that all would be teaching more than five years. Both called the program, "A neat idea," and thought the worst thing that one could say to them about the program was that it was "a waste of time."

These Interns were not only spokespersons for the program, but also for the profession. They assumed the role of "recruiter" and actively encouraged others at Calvin to pursue a career in education. In explaining the recruitment process, one Intern shared, "It's almost as if I can see people becoming more interested in teaching. [As a group] we've converted a lot of people." Clearly these Interns had become missionaries for the program and for education.

Both Interns continuously expressed what might be considered unrealistic teaching career goals. Although they insisted that they would be teaching for a number of years, they continued to discuss other

career options. By the end of their second year in the program, unrealistic expectations gave way to other career plans. One Intern was heavily involved in part-time work in a profession earlier discussed as an interest throughout the first two years in the BIT program. The other Intern discussed plans to pursue graduate studies. "I'm going to teach about four years and get graduate degrees. I want to go straight for my Ph.D. and skip my master's." This Intern insisted, however, that he/she would return to classroom teaching but conceded that perhaps it would be at a college level.

Notably, these two Interns who completed the recruitment phase with weak commitments (although having at some point expressed a strong commitment) took leadership roles in the BIT program. These roles, in fact, were fostered by the program's director. Perhaps a differentiation, therefore, should be made between commitment to teaching and commitment to the profession. These Interns demonstrated the latter. Their beliefs regarding the education profession were expressed sincerely and adamantly. Their commitment, although not resulting in years of teaching service, may be demonstrated, however, as advocates for the profession as a whole.

A comparison of the two groups. Reviewing the patterns of commitment as they related to other variables and the outcomes after two years in the program, three relationships emerge. These relationships are between level of commitment to teaching and a) intrinsic and extrinsic factors, b) importance of subject matter and career opportunities, and c) support from parents and peers. Differences between the ten Interns who completed the first two years of the

program with a strong commitment to classroom teaching and the four who did not are identifiable.

Although both groups expressed positive feelings toward the BIT program, its purpose and its accomplishments, the strongly committed group gave equal emphasis to the teaching profession and classroom teaching. This group consistently reiterated the personal rewards they felt would be reaped from teaching. Working with others and helping kids learn were consistent themes. The weakly committed group, on the other hand, expressed more satisfaction and concern with the formal program components including the seminars, speeches, publicity, the program director, and the intern "group." Although intrinsic and extrinsic factors played a role in each group's expressed commitment, the intrinsic factors were most often highlighted by those who planned to devote a number of years to the profession in teaching service.

The importance of subject matter and the potential for career advancement have been identified as factors related to commitment (Marso & Pigge, 1986). The importance of these factors was demonstrated in this study as well. In the strongly commitment group, seven of the ten Interns chose to pursue special education. In fact, all of the Interns who chose special education as their focus of study were strongly committed at the end of year two. The others in the group were in the secondary program. Subject matter for these Interns, however, was not focused upon as much as might be expected. Also, the future career plans that all ten of these Interns shared were compatible with classroom teaching (e.g., head of a department in a school or master's degree in education). Interns in the weakly committed group planned on double

majors or spoke of graduate studies in a content area. The importance of content to these interns is apparent, and, as one might expect, the subjects they pursued were closely related to other career options such as computer programming, law, and business.

Finally, the groups can be differentiated with respect to the perceived support they received from parents, the Intern group itself, and other peers. Interns who were strongly committed reported, for the most part, that parents, teachers, and peers shared their excitement when the Intern was accepted into the BIT program. Additionally, these Interns enjoyed and utilized the support of the BIT group. They were anxious, however, to become part of the general group of education students and shed the "special" image that was associated with the Bridenthal Interns.

Evidence of the same level of support by significant others was not as obvious with the four other Interns. Parents expressed an attitude of "acceptance" rather than excitement; friends questioned rather than congratulated. Also, when, in the second year, the group of 17 began to separate, thus group contact, these interns generally were disappointed and discussed the desire to preserve the "family."

### Discussion

Seventeen high ability high school students began college life with a formal induction into the education profession. These students were enticed into the program by a variety of benefits which included scholarship funds. Interestingly, however, although the scholarship monies continued to be important, students' ideas about teaching as a career and their reasons for remaining in the program changed.



In the beginning, many students expressed absolute confidence in their career decision while others were unsure of how long they might stay in teaching. Students who were more unsure thought of this program as a stepping stone to what they considered their "real" career. Much of their uncertainty stemmed from the lack of support offered by peers, family, and educators regarding their decision to become a teacher. Students also were presented with situations in which they needed to defend their decision to pursue a teaching career.

By the end of the first year, however, career views shifted for many students. Seminar discussions, public and professional exposure, and visits to schools at which students confronted many teaching realities (e.g., the work involved and the working conditions) discouraged students' long term commitments to teaching. Additionally, some began to feel uncomfortable with this "special" image that had been bestowed upon them. The percentage of students who expressed long term commitments to teaching decreased in the first year of the BIT program: The "Reservationists" and "Mavericks," were in the majority.

The second year brought changes in the program itself. Many of the unique aspects of the program disappeared and these students were slowly integrated into the regular education program. Students no longer attended seminars or met regularly. Instead, they began taking "education courses" with peers who had just entered the teacher training program at the end of their sophomore year. Nevertheless, the commitment to teaching voiced by the seventeen grew as a whole. By year two's end, all but a few were strongly committed to a teaching career and ready to enter the professional training sequences. Additionally, these strongly

committed students gave indications of their motives for pursuing teaching. These motivations were different from those given in the first year. Motives were built on a more realistic base. In the course of two years of intensive involvement in the program, three students who had never seriously considered teaching as a career and one who was unsure about teaching had been successfully recruited.

Aspects of the training program that served to develop and strengthen students' commitment to teaching included the following:

1. Knowledge of the professional and practical issues surrounding teaching from the perspective of the school, community, and state.
2. A peer support group within which students could process their knowledge about teaching and reasons for teaching.
3. A strong leader (program director) who continually prompted the analysis of teaching as a career and a profession.
4. A public platform that gave students recognition for participating in the teacher training program.
5. Utilization of "mentors" to help facilitate the transition from high school into the college.

For those students whose commitment at the end of the recruitment phase was weak, if our predictions are accurate, classroom teaching will not become a career and the BIT experience will have served other purposes. Those aspects of the program outlined above which served to develop and enhance commitment for the majority of the interns were not powerful enough to entice some interns' interests away from other careers. Factors related to the BIT program itself,

personal motivations and interests, and the lack of strong support from significant others regarding the decision to teach all affected commitment.

Is it appropriate to conclude, then, that the program failed in its attempt to recruit the four students who do not consider teaching a long-term career? We have focused in this paper on commitment to teaching and in that process discovered another type of commitment: commitment to education. Although they may not teach for long, two of the weakly committed interns expressed strong support for the teaching profession as a whole. They spoke eloquently of the profession's strengths, weaknesses, and problems looming in the future. These bright, young, well informed interns may one day hold political, social, or economic leadership roles. As advocates, thus, their early interest in education may benefit the profession in non-teaching ways.

The building of enthusiasm for teaching and knowledge about schooling during the recruitment phase provided the "high ability" students in this study with a more informed rationale for committing themselves to teaching. However, developing commitment to teaching during the recruitment phase of post-secondary education does not ensure that commitment will continue throughout the professional preparation program.

Commitment, as demonstrated herein, is a flexible construct that is subject to change. This change may be due to a variety of controllable and uncontrollable factors. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that if a teacher is graduated from a training program with a strong commitment to teaching, retention in the classroom is assured. The conditions of

teaching do much to impact teachers' long term commitment, the results of which are reflected in teacher attrition rates (Lowther, Gill, & Coppard, 1981; [Brackenridge] Forum, 1987).

In this first two years, however, there is evidence to suggest that "high ability" students may be at risk of leaving the teaching profession. The profession must continue to motivate these students in the field. Teaching must be a challenge that these students can meet. Additionally, their need to achieve personal and professional satisfaction must not be inhibited or they may seek satisfaction and purpose in other professions.

The research reported here only examines the first phase of the BIT program. The second and third phases of the program will allow interns to confront the realities of teaching first hand which will provide information regarding the "mix" of these students and the educational system.

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FIGURE 1

PRE PROFESSIONAL ENTRY. Extended Recruitment

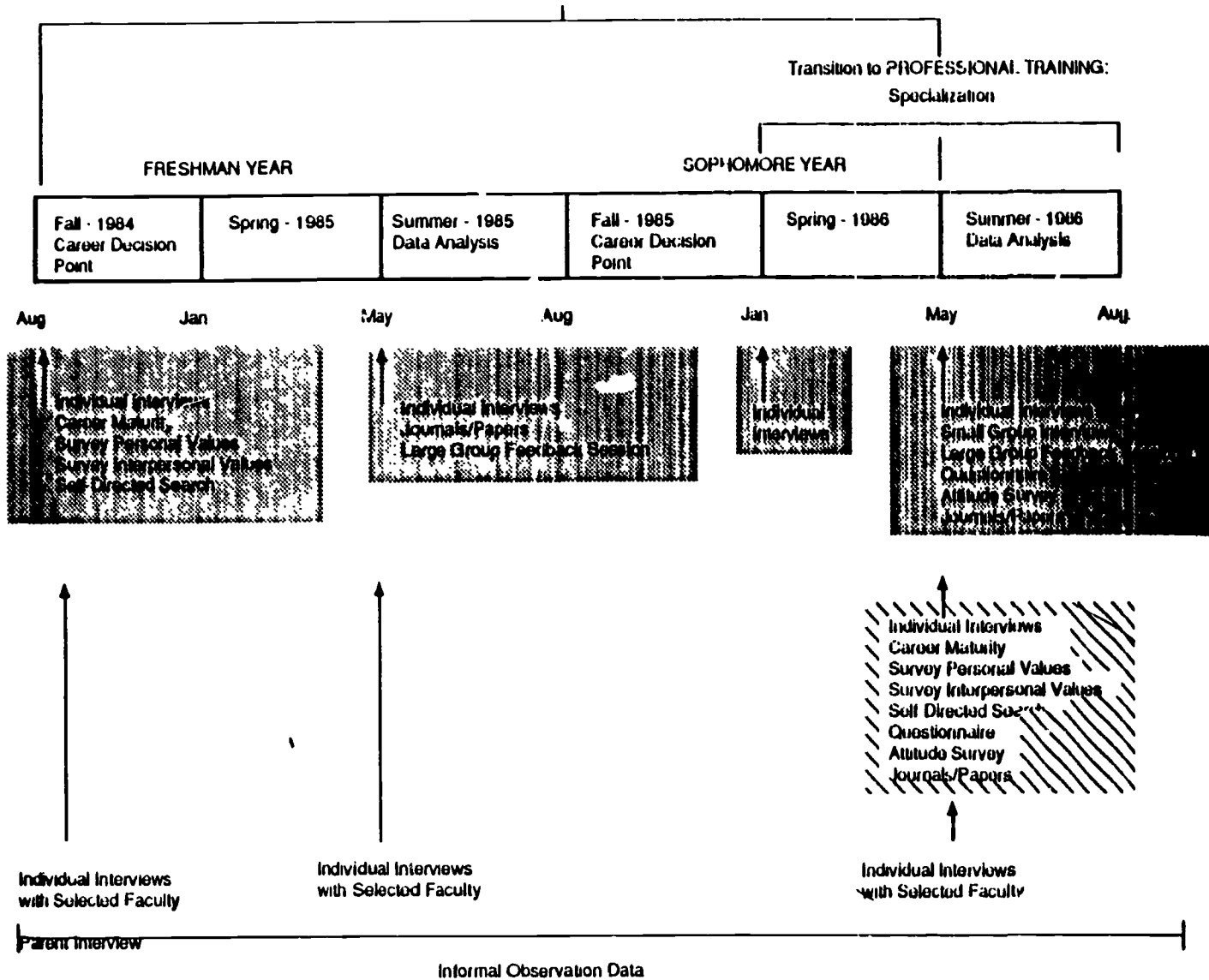




Table 1. Comparison of Commitment to Teaching Across Three Points in the BIT Program.

| Point in the<br>BIT Program                | Explicit Long-Term Commitment |         |       |
|--|-------------------------------|---------|-------|
|  | Strong/Yes                    | Weak/No |       |
| Fall, 1986 (n = 16)<br>(Prior to BIT)      |                               | 68.8%   | 31.2% |
| Spring, 1985 (n = 17)<br>(After one Year)  | 53%                           | 47%     |       |
| Spring, 1986 (n = 17)<br>(After Two Years) |                               | 70.5    | 29.5  |